

22 August 2020

#SAVESCOTTISHCOMEDY

An Open Letter from the Association of Scottish Comedic Arts (ASCA) to Creative Scotland; Creative Industries at Scottish Government.

We ask for your immediate support to save live comedy in Scotland.

The Association of Scottish Comedic Arts and the Live Comedy Association asked for help in July 2020. As yet, there has been no new funding announcement - time is of the essence to ensure the survival of Scotland's comedy industry.

We write today to further impress upon you the urgency of our situation.

We ask that

The Scottish Government and Creative Scotland understand the immediacy of emergency funding required to prevent the collapse of dedicated comedy venues ensuring individual performers can sustain themselves.

We ask that the recognition of the importance of grassroots music venues in Scotland's cultural landscape be extended to grassroots comedy venues, including the financial support these dedicated music venues have already received.

We note Creative Scotland's assertion that they have supported comedy with Bursaries and the Open Fund. We have found very little evidence of this, in fact of 70 freelancers working in the Scottish Comedy Industry surveyed, only one had accessed CS Bridging Bursary. Further to this, we have evidence showing very few applications from stand up comics secure funding and that there are barriers preventing our venues and performers accessing the finance made available by Scottish Government or Creative Scotland.

We are carrying out robust research into the projects and people who were denied these funding streams in order to understand the issues, and we will share our findings in due course. We ask respectfully if Creative Scotland and Scottish Government can share the evidence of which Comedy dedicated venues have been supported.

Our sector is at breaking point. 66% of the workforce is reliant on the Self Employment Income Support Scheme which is due to come to an end. Worryingly 37% have been unable to access any financial support at all. We need support now.

Scotland's dedicated comedy venues have a long history of providing grassroots support without them household names like Kevin Bridges, Daniel Sloss, Frankie Boyle, Danny Bhoy, Fern Brady, Susan Calman, Fred MacAuly, Greg McHugh and Larry Dean would have struggled to develop their craft. The #SaveLiveComedy #savescottishcomedy highlights our needs. We ask you, the fundholders, to follow it's stories from comedy performers, venues, producers, promoters, technical staff and writers. Many of these are suffering freelancers who require urgent support; support which you can provide.

We request confirmation from both the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland that there will be a sector specific package available to Scottish Comedy in the coming weeks, or that funds will be ring-fenced for our sector in any larger funding packages. If this is not secured many clubs, venues, producers, promoters and performers will be lost forever, and the Scottish Arts Scene will be the poorer for it.

Yours Sincerely,
Association of Scottish Comedic Arts & Live Comedy Association

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Signatories of this letter include key venues and performers from across the Scottish Comedy industry including:

Performers:

Kevin Bridges, Frankie Boyle, Daniel Sloss, Danny Bhoj, Janey Godley, Iain Stirling, Larry Dean, Fern Brady, Greg McHugh, Jo Caulfield, Richard Gadd, Tom Stade, Mark Nelson, Fred MacAulay, Des McLean, Michael Redmond, Gavin Mitchell, Mark Millar (writer), Gary Faulds, Susie McCabe, Gary Little, Raymond Mearns, Stuart Mitchell, Joe Heenan, Elaine Malcolmson, Gary Mickle, Viv Gee, Chris Forbes, Stuart Murphy, Keir McAllister, Gareth Mutch, Liam Withnail, Gareth Waugh, Stuart McPherson, Marc Jennings, Ross Leslie, Neil McFarlane, Julia Sutherland, Chris Dinwoodie, Robin Grainger, Liam Farrelly, Stephen Buchanan, Will Naameh (aka MC Hammersmith), Iain Hume, Donald Alexander, Rob Kane, Jay H Miles, Marjolein Robertson.

Founding Comic Members of ASCA: Jojo Sutherland, Billy Kirkwood, Jay Lafferty, Paul Sneddon (Vladimir McTavish), Elaine Miller, Susan Morrison, Ray Bradshaw and Scott Agnew.

Venues and Producers

Mike Jones Managing Director at The Stand in Edinburgh & Glasgow,
Karen and Katy Koren Artistic Directors at the Gilded Balloon in Edinburgh,
David Bleese Director & Co-owner at Monkey Barrel Comedy in Edinburgh,
Dr Andrew Greer at Rotunda Comedy Clubs in Glasgow,
Alan Anderson producer of the Scottish Comedy Awards,
Sarah Watson Director at the Glasgow Comedy Festival,
Mark Tughan Managing Director at Glee Clubs
Krista MacDonald, Director, Illicit Still Productions Ltd.
Clare Macaulay, Producer Clarabash Productions